

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-39 are pending in the application.

Claims 1-39 have been rejected.

Claims 1, 2, 9, 10, 16, 17, 23, 24, 30, 31, 37 and 39 have been amended.

**Rejection of Claims Under 35 U.S.C. §102**

Claims 1-39 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,587,126 issued to Wakai et al. (“Wakai”). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Independent Claims 1, 9, 16, 23, 30 and 37 have been amended to emphasize the distinctions between the claimed invention and the cited disclosure of Wakai. Applicants respectfully submit that a new art search is not required in order to determine the patentability of these claims. Applicants further submit that by so amending these claims, Applicants in no way concede that Wakai is indeed prior to any invention presently or previously claimed, and expressly reserve the right to pursue the claims in another application, for example, in a continuation. These claims have been amended, instead, to expedite prosecution and to emphasize the allowability of these claims.

Independent Claims 1, 9, 16 and 37 have been amended to replace the “identifying” claim element with a “selecting” claim element. The claims have been further amended to emphasize that the “selecting” is performed to select a first device from among the previously-claimed “plurality of devices,” which are each configured to perform a corresponding service. During the selecting, the first device of the plurality of devices is chosen to provide the requested service. Applicants respectfully submit that support for these claim amendments can be found in the application at ¶¶52 and 55.

Applicants respectfully submit that Wakai does not show a plurality of devices, coupled to the disclosed mechanism, from which a device is selected to provide a requested service. Applicants submit that the cited sections of Wakai show only one device coupled to the disclosed mechanism. *See* Wakai Figs. 2, 8. Applicants further submit that Wakai Fig. 7 does not remedy this lack of disclosure because each of the illustrated network devices have their own input/output operation unit (703). So, again, no selection of a device from among a number of devices is performed by such input/output operation units.

Similarly, independent Claims 23 and 30 have been amended to expressly claim that the plurality of devices are directly coupled to the claimed computer system or systems. Support can be found for these amended claim limitations at least in Figures 1A and 1B of the present application. As stated above, Applicants respectfully submit that the cited section of Wakai do not disclose a plurality of devices being coupled to Wakai's disclosed mechanism.

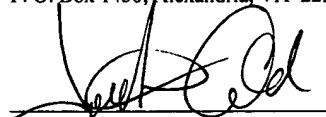
Dependent Claims 2, 10, 17, 24, 31 and 39 have been amended to provide language consistent with the independent claims from which these claims depend. Applicants respectfully submit that support for these amendments is the same as the support discussed above for the corresponding independent claims.

For at least these reasons, and for reasons expressed in responses to prior Office Actions, Applicants respectfully submit that independent Claims 1, 9, 16, 23, 30 and 37, and all claims dependent upon them, are in condition for allowance. Applicants therefore respectfully request the Examiner's reconsideration and withdrawal of the final rejections as to these claims, and an indication of the allowability of the final rejections as to these claims, and an indication of the allowability of same.

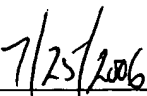
**CONCLUSION**

In view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein, the application and the claims therein are believed to be in condition for allowance without any further examination and a notice to that effect is solicited. Nonetheless, should any issues remain that might be subject to resolution through a telephonic interview, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at 512-439-5090.

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as First Class Mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop AF, COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS, P. O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on July 25, 2006.

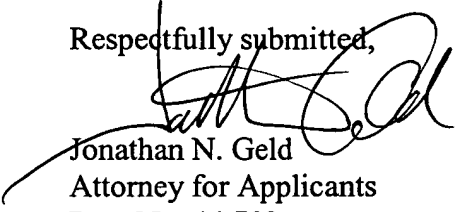


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Date of Signature

Respectfully submitted,



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